

REMARKS

This Response is submitted in reply to the Office Action dated January 13, 2006. Claims 17, 40-43, 45 and 46 have been amended. No new subject matter has been added to the Claims. Please charge Deposit Account No. 02-1818 for any payments due in connection with this Response.

The Office Action rejected Claims 17-20 and 40-46 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,894,717 to Yamashita et al. (“Yamashita”). Applicants respectfully disagree with such rejection for the reasons provided in Applicants’ December 19, 2005 Response. Nonetheless, to advance the prosecution of this application, Applicants have elected to amend certain Claims in accordance with the January 6, 2006 telephone interview.

Amended Claim 17 (and Claims 18-20 and 41 which depend therefrom) are generally directed toward a mower deck having a mower housing defining at least one cutting chamber. The mower housing has a front portion and a rear portion. The rear portion of the mower housing has: (a) at least one sidewall which defines a discharge opening, and the sidewall has an extension configured to guide a flow of material from the discharge opening to a destination. The extension has a first end and a second end. The first end is coupled to the sidewall, and the second end is located further from the front region of the mower housing than the first end. The second end has at least one engagement region. The mower deck also has an insert having at least one engagement region. The insert is configured to block the discharge opening when the insert is attached to the rear portion of the mower housing. The mower deck includes at least one fastener configured to couple the engagement region of the insert to the engagement region of the second end of the extension. A portion of the fastener is configured to be positioned adjacent to the rear portion of the mower housing. Such portion of the fastener is movable between: (a) one position resulting in the insert being attached to the rear portion of the mower housing; and (b) another position resulting in the insert being: (i) detached from the rear portion of the mower housing; or (ii) detachable from the rear portion of the mower housing through hand manipulation of the insert. Also, the mower deck has at least one cutting blade rotatably coupled to the mower housing, where the cutting blade is positioned within the cutting chamber. Applicants submit that Yamashita does not disclose such a mower deck having such an

extension. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 17, 18-20 and 41 are in condition for allowance.

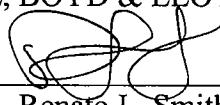
Amended Claim 40 (and Claims 42-46 which depend therefrom) are generally directed toward a mower deck having a top surface, a cutting blade rotatably supported beneath the top surface, and at least one sidewall extending downward from the top surface and forming a cutting chamber within which the blade rotates. The sidewall includes a front sidewall portion and a rear sidewall portion. The rear sidewall portion has a discharge wall which defines a discharge opening, and the rear sidewall portion has a material director having: (i) a first end adjacent to the rear sidewall portion; and (ii) a second end located further from the rear sidewall portion than the first end. The material director is operable to guide a flow of material from the discharge opening to a destination beyond the second end of the material director. The rear sidewall portion has a fastener support wall connected to the second end of the material director, and the rear sidewall portion has an insert configured to: (i) be attached to the rear sidewall portion; and (ii) block the discharge opening when the insert is attached to the rear sidewall portion. Also, the rear sidewall portion has at least one fastener operable to couple the insert to the fastener support wall. A portion of the fastener is configured to be positioned adjacent to the second end of the material director. Applicants submit that Yamashita does not disclose such a mower deck having such a material director. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 40 and 42-46 are in condition for allowance.

An earnest endeavor has been made to place this application in condition for formal allowance and is courteously solicited. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this Amendment, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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